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3.5(c)

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GROUP 1
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COUNTRY: SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI: FEBRUARY 1968

File VN

SUBJECT: [redacted] POST-VC-OFFENSIVE PROBLEMS IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE AND ANTICIPATED ENEMY ACTIONS

3.3(h)(2)

ACQ: [redacted]

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SOURCE: [redacted]

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SUMMARY: IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE, WHERE MOST OF THE ASSAULT FORCES WERE NVA, THE ENEMY LOST AT LEAST ONE-FOURTH OF HIS STRENGTH AND PERHAPS ANOTHER ONE-FOURTH IN WOUNDED. THE ENEMY FOLLOWED HIS PLAN OF ATTACK EVEN THOUGH IT WAS

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OBVIOUS HE HAD FAILED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS OBJECTIVES. MOST ALLIED COMMANDERS WERE WELL PREPARED TO MEET THE ATTACK WHEN IT CAME. WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS GVN OFFICIALS AND ARVN PERFORMED WELL. THE PEOPLE REFUSED TO RALLY TO THE ENEMY AND IN MANY CASES FOUGHT BACK. BY 15 FEBRUARY MOST OFFICES OF THE PROVINCE ADMINISTRATION WERE OPEN AND FUNCTIONING. THE ENEMY'S MOVE INTO FORMER RD PRIORITY AREAS IS REGRETTABLE. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM ADDED TO THE RECOVERY-RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT THAT LIES AHEAD WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE 1968 PACIFICATION EFFORT. A SECOND VC/NVA ATTACK IN QUANG TRI NOW SEEMS LESS OF A POSSIBILITY, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THAN IT DID THE FIRST THREE WEEKS FOLLOWING TET. THE ENEMY DOES SEEM MOTIVATED, HOWEVER, BY AN OVERWHELMING COMPULSION TO ACHIEVE A QUICK AND STARTLING VICTORY. ALTHOUGH THE ENEMY SAW AN OPPORTUNITY IN HUE, HE WILL SOONER OR LATER TIRE OF THE HUE STRUGGLE AND DRIVE AT SOME OTHER TARGET FOR A QUICK PSYCHOLIGICAL VICTORY, WHICH COULD BE A PRELUDE TO NEGOTIATIONS. KHE SANH IS THE MOST OBVIOUS OPPORTUNITY. BECAUSE OF U.S. AIR AND FIRE POWER HE PROBABLY WOULD BE FORCED TO USE AIR POWER AS WELL AS TANKS. WHEN THIS

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HAPPENS HE WILL IN REALITY BE ESCALATING THE WAR. WHETHER HE IS READY AND WILLING TO DO SO IS OPEN TO QUESTION. THE CHARACTER OF THE TET OFFENSIVE INDICATED THE ENEMY WAS MORE INTERESTED IN A QUICK END TO THE WAR. MOST ALLIED COMMANDERS FEEL THAT THE VC MUST EFFECTIVELY BLOCK ALLIED CAPABILITY TO REINFORCE AND RESUPPLY COMBAT ELEMENTS IF HE WANTS TO MOUNT A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IN QUANG TRI. THE ENEMY DOES HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO REACH VIRTUALLY ALL ALLIED BASES ON ROUTE NO. 9 AND EASTWARD TO CUA VIET WITH ARTILLERY. THE ENEMY HAS BEEN MORE ADEPT AT PROPAGANDAIZING THE PEOPLE THAN THE ALLIERS. HE HAS CONTINUED TO OPERATE AMONG THE PEOPLE, TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT ALLIES HAVE BEEN CONSTRAINED TO REMOVE THE PEOPLE AS REFUGEES. THE ENEMY NEEDS TO SUBSTITUTE A SYSTEM OF HIS OWN FOR THE PRESENT SYSTEM--WRECK GVN HAMLET AND VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS, LAND-USE SYSTEMS, AND CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC TAPROOTS. THE OUTLOOK IN QUANG TRI IS THAT THE ENEMY WILL RESIST VIGOROUSLY ALLIED EFFORTS TO PERMANENTLY REESTABLISH RD SECURITY. HE WILL STEP UP HIS ATTACKS AGAINST BASES AND LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS AS A MATTER OF GENERAL POLICY, IF NOT AS A PRELUDE TO A SECOND

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OFFENSIVE. HE PROBABLY WILL TRY TO HANG ONTO TO HUE AND/OR THE ENVIRONS OF HUE. HE MAY IN DESPERATION TRY TO TAKE KHE SANH TO EMBARRASS THE U.S. WAR EFFORT. HAVING LOST FACE, AND WITH COMMUNIST CHINA'S BACKING AND URGING, THE ENEMY MAY BE HEEDLESS OF THE ESCALATION FACTOR. IF THAT IS THE CASE THE ALLIES HAVE A NEW FACTOR TO WORRY ABOUT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATURE AND THE EFFECT OF THE ENEMY'S SO-CALLED TET OFFENSIVE IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE APPEARED TO BE VERY MUCH LIKE WHAT HAPPENED IN MOST PROVINCES UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY. THERE WERE SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES HOWEVER. FOR EXAMPLE, MOST OF THE ALLIED COMMANDERS IN-PROVINCE CORRECTLY DIAGNOSED THE ENEMY'S INTENT IN ADVANCE AND WERE WELL PREPARED TO MEET THE ATTACKS WHEN THEY CAME. AS A RESULT THE ENEMY LOST AT LEAST ONE-FOURTH OF HIS TOTAL MILITARY STRENGTH IN THE QUANG TRI LOWLANDS AND ANOTHER FOURTH MAY HAVE BEEN WOUNDED. IN QUANG TRI THE ASSAULT FORCES WERE MOSTLY REGULAR NVA UNITS, NOT VC. AS WAS THE CASE IN MANY PROVINCES, THE ENEMY'S PLAN WAS INCORRECT IN CONCEPT AND FAULTY IN EXECUTION. IN QUANG TRI HE TELEGRAPHED HIS PUNCH IN MANY WAYS AND HE FAILED TO ACHIEVE A COORDINATED EFFORT WHICH WOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM A MUCH GREATER SHOCK EFFECT. IN FACT THE ENEMY COM-

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PULSIVELY FOLLOWED HIS PLAN OF ATTACK IN QUANG TRI EVEN THOUGH IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE HAD FAILED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PRELIMINARY OBJECTIVES OF CUTTING OUR LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS AND NEUTRALIZING OUR COMBAT BASES.

2. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE ENEMY EXPECTED A GREATER RESPONSE FROM THE PEOPLE THAN HE RECEIVED. THE PEOPLE NOT ONLY REFUSED TO RALLY TO THE ENEMY'S SIDE, IN MANY CASES THE COURAGEOUSLY FOUGHT BACK. THE PERFORMANCES OF MANY POPULAR FORCE/REGIONAL FORCE (PF/RF) AND RD GROUPS WERE ESPECIALLY NOTEWORTHY. ALTHOUGH MANY OF THESE UNITS WERE REDEPLOYED TO MORE SECURE AREAS AS THE ENEMY'S ATTACK UNFOLDED, OTHERS WERE LEFT IN POSITION TO FIGHT, AND FIGHT THEY DID. IN SOME AREAS THE RURAL PEOPLE REFUSED FOOD TO FORAGING NVA SOLDIERS. [redacted] 3.3(h)(2)

[redacted] THE PEOPLE WERE 3.3(h)(2)

STILL PROVINDING TIMELY INFORMATION DESPITE THE SHARP INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ENEMY TROOPS IN THEIR MIDST AND DESPITE THE INTENSE ENEMY PSYWAR EFFORT THAT ACCOMPANIED HIS BATTLE EFFORT.

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3. NO GVN OFFICIAL IN QUANG TRI DESERTED HIS POST OR OTHERWISE PROVED TO BE A TRAITOR OR A COWARD. THE CHIEF BUDDHIST PRIEST IN QUANG TRI, THICH THIEN BINH, WAS DEMONSTRABLY PRO-GVN THROUGHOUT THE EMERGENCY PERIOD. ONLY THE PROVINCE CHIEF, LIEUTENANT COLONEL NGUYEN AM, APPEARED TO BE SHOCKED TO A POINT OF TOTAL INEFFECTIVENESS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE ENEMY ATTACK, BUT HIS BURDEN WAS PICKED UP BY THE REST OF HIS STAFF AND BY HIS AMERICAN ADVISORS. THE COMBINATION OF THE TET OFFENSIVE AND THE TET HOLIDAY PREVENTED THE PROVINCE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY FROM FUNCTIONING FULLY FOR SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE EMERGENCY ABATED. BY 15 FEBRUARY, HOWEVER, MOST OFFICES WERE OPEN AND FUNCTIONING. FORTUNATELY THE SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEE SERVICES WERE ON THE JOB THROUGHOUT THE MEERGENCY PERIOD. THEY FUNCTIONED VERY WELL INDEED.

4. THE MOST DISCOURAGING FACTOR FROM THE FREE WORLD'S STANDPOINT WAS THE PARALYSIS WHICH GRIPPED THE 1ST ARVN REGIMENT. THIS FOUR-BATTALION REGIMENT SUFFERED ONLY LIGHT CASUALTIES DURING THE ATTACK BUT THEY FAILED TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT THEIR ADVANTAGE AFTER THE ENEMY WAS REPULSED WITH HEAVY LOSSES. THIS, COUPLED WITH AN ALMOST COMPLETE ALLIED PSYWAR BREAKDOWN IN THE RURAL AREAS, PERMITTED THE ENEMY TO MOVE INTO THE POWER

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VACUUM IN THE FORMER RD PRIORITY AREA IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE.

5. THERE WERE SEVERAL INSTANCES OF ENEMY-GENERATED BLACK PROPAGANDA PLOYS. A RADIO BROADCASTING STATION PURPORTING TO BE AN OFFICIAL GVN OUTLET STATED ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS THAT GENERAL VIEN HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS IN SAIGON WHO HAD PUBLICLY GONE OVER TO THE VIET CONG; THAT AMERICAN B-52S HAD BOMBED HUE; THAT THE AMERICANS WERE PULLING OUT OF THE WAR AND OPTING FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE IMMINENT, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN THE CEDING OF QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN PROVINCES TO NORTH VIETNAM. IN THE RURAL AREAS THE ENEMY REPEATEDLY TOLD THE POPULACE THAT KHE SANH HAD FALLEN AND THAT HUE WAS IN VC HANDS. STORIES OF ARVN, POLICE, AND RF/PF MASS DESERTIONS TO THE ENEMY WERE ALSO BRUTED ABOUT. (COMMENT: LINH QUANG VIEN IS INTERIOR MINISTER; CAO VAN VIEN IS JGS CHIEF.)

6. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH THE PEOPLE WE USUALLY CONSIDER TO BE THE ELITE IN THIS PROVINCE SEEMED TO BE MORE AFFECTED BY RUMORS THAN THE COMMON FOLK. THE COMMANDER OF THE 1ST ARVN REGIMENT IN FACT PUBLICLY CHASTISED THE AMERICAN MILITARY'S RESPONSE TO THE ENEMY'S CHALLENGE. HE SIMMERED DOWN LATER, BUT AT TIMES OTHER GVN OFFICIALS SEEMED TO BE DEEPLY DEPRESSED AND SOMEWHAT UNREASONABLE

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IN THEIR ATTITUDES. THE HUE SITUATION AFFECTED MANY OFFICIALS WHO HAD FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN THAT BESIEGED CITY. THE VORTEX OF POWER AND CULTURE WHICH DESCENDS FROM HUE TO THIS PROVINCE WAS SUDDENLY AND COMPLETELY WIPED OUT, OR SO IT SEEMED TO THE OFFICIALS IN QUANG TRI. IT WAS LAMENTABLE BUT NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, TO FIND ARVN COMMANDERS ESPECIALLY IN A STATE OF SHOCK. BY 25 FEBRUARY SOME ASPECTS OF NORMALCY HAD RETURNED AND AN EFFORT, STILL RELATIVELY FEEBLE, WAS BEING MADE TO GET ON WITH RECOVERY AND PACIFICATION.

7. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN QUANG TRI AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE TET OFFENSIVE WAS NOT SEVERE, BUT THE REFUGEE POPULATION GENERATED AS A RESULT OF PRE-TET AND POST-TET MILITARY OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN HUONG HOA (KHE SANH) AND CAM LO DISTRICTS, HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE. APPROXIMATELY 14,000 NEW REFUGEES WERE EXPECTED. THE CARE AND FEEDING OF THESE PEOPLE COMMANDED A GOOD PROPORTION OF THE STAFFS OF BOTH CORDS AND THE GVN AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO FOR SOME TIME. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM ADDED TO THE RECOVERY-RE-BUILDING EFFORT WHICH LIES AHEAD PROBABLY WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE 1968 PACIFICATION EFFORT IN QUANG TRI.

8. THE SECOND ATTACK ON QUANG TRI CITY, WHICH, DURING THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF FEBRUARY, SEEMED INEVITABLE AND IMMINENT,

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NOW SEEMS TO BE LESS OF A POSSIBILITY - AT LEAST IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE ENEMY APPARENTLY COMMITTED THE BULK OF HIS AVAILABLE FORCES IN THIS AREA TO THE TET OFFENSIVE. WHEN THAT FAILED, HE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY IN HUE AND SHIFTED SOME FORCES, THE 812TH AND THE 95TH NVA REGIMENTS, TO THUA THIEN. IT DOES NOT NOW SEEM LIKELY THAT HE CAN REINFORCE HIS TROOPS IN AND AROUND HUE SOON ENOUGH. THE ENEMY DOES SEEM TO BE MOTIVATED HOWEVER, BY AN OVERWHELMING COMPULSION TO ACHIEVE A QUICK AND STARTLING VICTORY. HE THEREFORE MAY THROW GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD, GAMBLING ON WEAKENING OF OUR RESOLVE TO HOLD HUE. SOONER OR LATER THE ENEMY IS BOUND TO TIRE OF THE HUE STRUGGLE AND IN A LEMMING-LIKE FASHION DRIVE AT SOME OTHER TARGET FOR A QUICK PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY WHICH COULD BE A PRELUDE TO NEGOTIATIONS FAVORABLE TO THE NFLSV.

9. THE MOST OBVIOUS OPPORTUNITY OPEN TO HIM IS AT KHE SANH. ALTHOUGH KHE SANH NO LONGER HAS ANY POLITICAL VALUE VIS-À-VIS THE GVN, IT HAS ASSUMED AN IMAGE GREATER THAN IT DESERVES IN TERMS OF U.S. MILITARY PRESTIGE IN VIETNAM. IT IS STILL, THEN, A LEGITIMATE TARGET IN HANOI'S EYES. THE ENEMY NO LONGER HAS THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE WORKING FOR HIM IN KHE SANH. HE MUST REALIZE THAT WHEN HE BEGINS HIS ASSAULT ON KHE SANH HE WILL PROBABLY BE HIT ON THE

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FLANKS AND REAR BY ELEMENTS OF TWO AIR-MOBILE U.S. DIVISIONS AND MASSIVE AIR AND ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS. AT KHE-SANH THE ENEMY DOES HAVE SHORT SUPPLY LINES AND FAVORABLE TERRAIN. TO TIP THE SCALES IN THE ENEMY'S FAVOR, HOWEVER, THE ENEMY WILL PROBABLY BE FORCED TO USE TACTICAL AIR AS WELL AS ARMOR. WHEN THIS HAPPENS THE ENEMY PROBABLY REALIZES HE WILL IN REALITY BE ESCALATING THE WAR ANOTHER NOTCH. WHETHER HE IS READY AND WILLING TO DO SO IS OPEN TO QUESTION.

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10. THE CHARACTER OF THE TET OFFENSIVE, HOWEVER, INDICATED THAT THE ENEMY WAS MORE INTERESTED IN A QUICK END TO THE WAR, NOT AN ESCALATION. THE MUCH-HERALDED SECOND WAVE OF ATTACKS ON CITIES AND TOWNS IN VIET NAM WILL BE MUCH HARDER FOR THE ENEMY TO BRING OFF BECAUSE THE FIRST ATTACK WAS SO EXPENSIVE FOR HIM. HE SUFFERED GRIEVOUS LOSSES IN MANPOWER AND SUPPLIES. GUERRILLAS AND VC CADRES WHO HELPED HIM IN ALL PHASES (LOGISTICS, INTELLIGENCE, AND GUIDES) HAVE BEEN HURT. THE PEOPLE, SOME OF WHOM WERE MUGWUMPS BEFORE, HAVE HARDENED AGAINST HIS CYNICAL AND BLOODTHIRSTY VISAGE. AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO VISUALIZE HOW THE ENEMY CAN REPEAT IN ACHIEVING TACTICAL SURPRISE. AN ANALYSIS OF THE TET OFFENSIVE WOULD PROBABLY SHOW THAT WHERE THE ENEMY DID NOT ACHIEVE THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, HE WAS SOUNDLY DEFEATED. THIS WAS THE DIFFERENCE IN QUANG TRI AT LEAST.

11. ASSUMING THAT THE ENEMY STILL WANTS TO MOUNT A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IN QUANG TRI, MOST COMMANDERS FEEL THE ENEMY MUST EFFECTIVELY BLOCK ALLIED CAPABILITY TO REINFORCE AND RESUPPLY COMBAT ELEMENTS. HE MAY STILL STRIVE FOR TACTICAL SURPRISE BY SACRIFICING HIS UNDER-STRENGTH BATTALIONS NOW IN QUANG TRI IN DIVERSIONARY ATTACKS ON BASES AND CITIES FROM THE REAR, WHILE THROWING IN FRESH

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TROOPS IN A MAIN EFFORT FROM THE NORTH AND WEST. THE ENEMY HAS THE CAPABILITY TO REACH VIRTUALLY ALL ALLIED BASES ON ROUTE NO. 9 AND EASTWARD TO CUA VIET WITH ARTILLERY. A MASSIVE ARTILLERY SIEGE OF THESE BASES COUPLED WITH THE GROUND TACTICS MENTIONED ABOVE COULD PROVE TROUBLESOME BUT NOT NECESSARILY CATASTROPHIC.

12. THERE IS A DANGER IN VIEWING THIS CAMPAIGN IN CONVENTIONAL MILITARY TERMS. THE ENEMY ALREADY HAS FORCED THE ALLIES IN KHE SANH AND ALONG THE DMZ TO THINK IN TERMS OF "SET PIECE" BATTLES. AFTER FORCING THE ALLIES INTO MILITARY POSTURES FOR ENGAGEMENTS OF THIS SORT, THE ENEMY THEN REVERTED TO REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE WHICH HAS TO DO MORE WITH PEOPLE AND POLITICS THAN IT DOES WITH CONVENTIONAL ARMS. THE ENEMY STILL CONTINUES TO HOLD THE RD AREA OR A GOOD PART OF IT. HE HAS BEEN MUCH MORE ADEPT IN PROPAGANDIZING THE PEOPLE THAN THE ALLIES HAVE. HE HAS CONTINUED TO OPERATE AMONG THE PEOPLE, TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT ALLIES HAVE OFTEN BEEN CONSTRAINED TO REMOVE THE PEOPLE AS REFUGEES. THIS TENDENCY IS VIEWED BY MANY AS PACIFICATION IN REVERSE. THE ENEMY'S GOAL IS TO CREATE HAVOC AND ANARCHY - TO ELIMINATE "OUR" SYSTEM IN ORDER TO SUBSTITUTE ONE OF HIS OWN. THE ENEMY NEEDS TO WRECK GVN HAMLET AND VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS, LAND-USE SYSTEMS, AND CULTURAL AND

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ECONOMIC TAPROOTS. THE DELIBERATE GENERATION OF REFUGEES, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY ARE GVN-ORIENTED IN THE MAIN, IS TANTAMOUNT TO AN ADMISSION OF PACIFICATION BANKRUPTCY.

13. THE OUTLOOK IN QUANG TRI IS THAT ENEMY WILL RESIST VIGOROUSLY ALLIED EFFORTS TO PERMANENTLY REESTABLISH RD SECURITY. HE WILL STEP UP HIS ATTACKS AGAINST BASES AND LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS AS A MATTER OF GENERAL POLICY IF NOT AS A PRELUDE TO A SECOND OFFENSIVE. HE WILL PROBABLY TRY TO HANG ONTO HUE AND/OR THE ENVIRONS OF HUE. HE MAY IN DESPERATION TRY TO TAKE KHE SANH TO EMBARRASS THE U.S. WAR EFFORT. HAVING LOST FACE, AND WITH RED CHINA'S BACKING AND URGING, THE ENEMY MAY BE HEEDLESS OF THE ESCALATION FACTOR. IF THAT IS THE CASE THE ALLIES HAVE A NEW FACTOR TO WORRY ABOUT.

14. [redacted] 3.3(h)(2)

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